



Speech by

**DIANNE REILLY**

**MEMBER FOR MUDGEERABA**

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Hansard 5 June 2003

#### **STATE BUDGET 2003-04**

**Mrs REILLY** (Mudgeeraba—ALP) (11.04 p.m.): I am delighted to rise to support the appropriation bills and the Treasurer's third budget. At the outset I congratulate the Treasurer, his staff and the Premier for delivering another great budget for the people of Queensland—a budget for the people, as the *Gold Coast Bulletin* so astutely reported on Wednesday.

This budget again makes me proud to be a member of this Beattie government—a government which is committed to improving quality of life for all Queenslanders and which is consistently delivering through its budgetary priorities the services needed to achieve that quality of life. This is a core Labor budget with its focus on health, education, support for people with disabilities and their families and housing. It is also a budget that places job creation at the top of the agenda through a massive capital works allocation of \$5.3 billion and a continued commitment to labour market programs, including the employment of a further 300 public sector apprentices over the next four years in skill shortage areas.

There is no doubt that the Gold Coast will benefit from the major capital works injections to the region for projects such as the Gold Coast Convention Centre and a further \$6 million under the Breaking the Unemployment Cycle program, which will create over 1,000 jobs alone. This builds on the funding already allocated to the Mudgeeraba electorate, where \$2.8 million was spent between October 1998 and March 2003 to create 673 jobs under Breaking the Unemployment Cycle programs—projects which have also provided great benefits to local communities.

The Gold Coast has also been a big winner when it comes to Main Roads and Transport. The record \$3.51 billion operating budget is delivering the big-ticket items such as the Tugun bypass, integrated ticketing and smartcard technology for south-east Queensland. As the *Gold Coast Bulletin* highlighted, the people of Carrara in my electorate have much to celebrate. Long awaited and badly needed roadworks on the major east-west arterial road of Nerang-Broadbeach Road will be completed with the injection of \$2.9 million to intersection upgrades at Ross Street, at a total cost of \$8.8 million, and \$1.195 million to complete the realignment of four lanes at the Goodings Corner deviation, at a total cost of \$11.3 million. A further \$1.4 million has been allocated to commence interchange improvement works on the Pacific Highway at Nielsens Road at a total cost of \$14 million. These allocations meet election commitments to address these congested traffic centres. I have lobbied long and hard for this, as have the residents of Carrara and Nerang and local councillor Bob La Castra. All are to be congratulated on their efforts.

However, I wish also to mention the local Main Roads office district manager, Eddie Peters, and his staff and their engineers for their dogged determination, broad community consultation and careful planning of these works. There is also an additional \$586,000 for local road and drainage works. This government is delivering major roads infrastructure for the Gold Coast in the areas which need it most. We will continue to deliver outcomes for the Gold Coast, systematically prioritising roadworks projects throughout the region to meet the needs of a growing population and an ever-increasing demand on our road network.

The Minister for Main Roads, Steve Bredhauer, is to be commended for his attention to the Gold Coast, which has been over and above what has been expected in the past five years and possibly to the expense of other areas of the state that are also crying out because of their growing demand for additional Main Roads funding. Other initiatives in the electorate of Mudgeeraba include a \$200,000 allocation under the Transport Infrastructure Development Scheme for a bus set-down area

and car park at Emmanuel College, at a total cost of \$510,000. I thank council for its cooperation on that project, which will be funded on a fifty-fifty basis.

Education has been and remains a cornerstone of the Beattie government and our Smart State agenda. Almost \$10.5 million has been allocated to the progress of the new school on Somerset Drive at Mudgeeraba, where construction and site preparation is well under way. I want to thank the local community for its enthusiasm and positive commitment in embracing this new primary school. Community consultation on aspects of the school such as its name, uniform, philosophy and curriculum have begun and has been met with excitement by local parents ready to enrol their children. My thanks go to all those who attended, especially to the site manager and the crew who prepared a safe and attractive area and provided the barbecues so that we could all enjoy the magnificent view which the lucky children of this state-of-the-art facility will be able to enjoy when the school opens in January of next year.

The local community and I look forward to welcoming the founding principal, Stephen Loggie, when he moves to the area and begins his official duties next month. I know from his visits to the Gold Coast, where his family has already settled, that he is keen to become an active member of this community and to call the Gold Coast home. Further capital works spending of \$520,000 in total will provide new toilets at William Duncan and Worongary state schools. Another \$44,000 will be spent repainting school buildings at Worongary State School.

The 'green behind the gold' remains a popular tourist destination and we recognise that hinterland tourism must be managed and, most importantly, it must be safe to leave visitors with a life-long memory and a lasting commitment to the preservation of the region for generations to come. An additional \$87,000 has been allocated for safety fencing at Purlingbrook Falls, \$35,000 for the Rush Creek Bridge at Twin Falls Circuit, both in the Springbrook National Park. Funding has also gone to support the work of local Parks and Wildlife officers. Some \$471,000 has been allocated to the Gold Coast Hinterland Great Walks project at Lamington National Park.

While I am obviously excited by the allocations of funding within my electorate and throughout the Gold Coast—which I could not and did not have time to elaborate on fully—the area of the budget which brings me the most joy is the unprecedented commitment made to providing a better quality of life for Queenslanders with a disability. Last year the government initiated a funding reform project to address the existing and emerging needs of people with a disability and their families and carers. As a member of the minister's backbench task force advising on the project, I followed the progress on the statewide consultations closely and had the opportunity to have an input into the process and make my concerns and those of my constituents known to the minister and the department.

I met with a number of peak bodies and individuals involved in the sector—some local service providers and others who provide services across Queensland—as well as many parents, carers and people with a disability. Since I first worked in the Office of Disability in 1991 I have been acutely aware of the issues, the concerns and the daily struggle to survive and to live some semblance of the normal life which we take for granted which people with a disability and their families face every day.

Then for much of last year my staff and I worked closely with a single mother of two autistic children who, after struggling to cope without adequate support after the breakdown of her marriage, made the heart-wrenching decision to relinquish into the care of the state her eldest child who has high support needs and is severely intellectually disabled. As any mother would, this woman regretted that soul-destroying decision the minute she made it. Having been unable to secure for her the additional support she had originally begged for, I felt responsible in a very deep way for her pain, and I committed myself to the task of advocating on her behalf for the reunification of her family.

After almost a year that outcome was achieved with the full package of support the family needs to stay together, but it is not the end of the story because for these families the story never ends. The reality is that they will always need ongoing support just to live from day to day and then to face the new challenges that come with their children's progression to adulthood and their own ageing.

I am safe in saying that, while the members opposite bleat on and on like castrated lambs about budget deficits, this family and every family like them could not care less. They just want to see the money. This woman never, ever said to me, 'I'll only take the money if it doesn't mean that there is a budget deficit.' I challenge the Opposition Leader to look into the face of this burdened single mother of two and tell her that she should not have the support she needs because it will put the budget into deficit. If the members opposite have so little heart that they could do that, let us see them try it, because this is the true heart of the Treasurer's third budget. This is the true heart of this Labor government, and the members opposite do not want to hear it. The members opposite cannot stand it because they are struggling to feel their own hearts beating through their cold, hard chests.

Some \$290.5 million over the next four years; that is the heart of this Labor government. The disability sector has been crying out for this injection of funds for years. Its cries have been falling on the deaf ears of those opposite who do not want to hear it, including the years when the coalition was in

power and over years and years of conservative governments. It took a Labor government with heart to deliver it.

Tuesday was a proud day for me, and all those in the disability sector who have committed their lives to improving the lives of people with a disability should also be proud. This historic injection of funds will mean amongst other things an extra \$54.5 million to strengthen families and build community capacity. I hope that that funding boost will mean support for families so that that mother and no other family will ever again find themselves in the untenable position of having to give up their child in order to secure the support that they need.

Coalition governments shamefully neglected Queenslanders with disabilities for decades, but we have made them a priority. If the members opposite listen, they might hear something. Since coming to power the Beattie government has consistently boosted funding to the sector from the tragically low levels at which it lingered in the past. By 2006-07 funding for disabilities will be almost 164 per cent greater than when we came to office. The Minister for Disability Services, Judy Spence, her staff and her department, especially Paige Armstrong, the previous Minister for Disability Services, Anna Bligh—I see her in the chamber—the Treasurer and the Premier can all take the credit for that. I thank them and I look forward to sharing the good news with local service providers and constituents.

I know that many service providers like Gold Coast Family Support, Bethany Respite Centre, Gold Coast Sport and Recreation, the Endeavour Foundation, the Cerebral Palsy League, the Gold Coast Autism Support Group, members of the Gold Coast Disability Task Force and the local service of DSQ, just to name a few, will already be working hard on securing the region's share of these new funds. With our growing population and our demand for disability services the support needs are high and increasing. I will be there to support my local providers in the process, because I am confident that this budget through this historic allocation will go a long way to improving the lives of people with a disability and their families on the Gold Coast. I commend the Treasurer on his work and I commend the bills.